



The selling manager

What exactly is a “selling manager?”

A manager responsible for overseeing both the duties of their staff **PLUS** one who is personally accountable for their own territory or book of business. (A.K.A. the toughest job in corporate America) The role of a Selling manager has come about to enable the oversight of the sales organization on a shoestring budget. It is often times an interim role as a company reaches the awkward growth stage in which they need sales oversight, but can't quite afford to budget for an \$80,000- \$100,000 manager. In addition, it is common practice for professional firms such as Accounting, Engineering, Architectural, Legal, Insurance and Financial planning oversee business and client development by assign a partner or practice manager as the go-to sales or marketing manager.

The facts are in:

- Most sales managers have been promoted to their position based on exceptional sales performance
- The majority of companies do not coach or mentor their new managers.
- Often times the promotion comes with the caveat that you must also maintain your book of business.

You have consistently been a top sales performer. It is therefore assumed that you know how to manage sales people as well as your own time. You now find yourself in a world in which that which has always worked well doesn't seem to fit this new role. In addition, you generally have very little insight and guidance from others. You also come to the quick realization that some of the people who work for you are not motivated by the same things and their selling skills and work ethics vary widely. Hopefully through a process of trial and error, hard work and fits and starts an effective manager emerges 18 months later.

Working in corporate America for 30 plus years for all sized companies, and having done almost every job related to sales and business development I can say with confidence that being a selling manager is, hands down, the very toughest job in sales. Why is it that we place one of the most critical corporate objectives: Revenue retention and growth in the hands of an unproven rookie and expect them to “figure it out”.

How it all started:

You have been working for the company for five years, consistently outperforming your peers through hard work and dedication. You love the company and are looking for the next step in your career. While you enjoy sales, you are seeking professional

growth, and new challenges. One day your manager calls you into her office. She states that, “Sales are going well, and I am pleased with your performance. We continue to grow and it is getting tougher for me to keep a pulse on sales. I have an opportunity for you. Would you be up for a newly created role? We need a sales manager. It doesn’t pay quite so well but the challenges and opportunities are exceptional.”

Flattered, excited about the challenge and eager to grow, you take on the new selling manager position with zeal, committed to making a difference. After transitioning some or most of your accounts to one of your sales people, you decide to “get busy”. So you schedule one on ones with all your people, to get up to speed, only to find that not everyone is using the expensive CRM software your company installed 18 months ago. Turning your attention to the sales pipeline, you discover that all the deals your former peers were talking about for 3 months in the sales meeting actually have very little promise of truly closing. You discover that the sales rep has been calling at too low a level in their accounts and lacks the assertiveness to “go for no”. Looking at your newly inherited team’s new client opportunities alerts you to the fact that very few of your reps have enough new opportunities coming into the sales funnel on a regular basis. Towards the end of your first week, you begin to hear rumblings that Ted, your former sales peer and the person whom you beat out for this newly created role, is planting seeds of doubt as to your abilities among your newly acquired team. The intercom buzzes, your boss calls you into the office to tell you, by the way, I need first draft of next years budget on my desk by Tuesday. Returning to your office, your cell phone rings, it’s Dave, the COO for your largest client. He’s escalating his quality issues to you and wants to know how you will resolve it by end of day or he will take his business elsewhere.

Frustrated, you do what every great sales person does... you decide to do it yourself, hoping that you will reel in the languishing business from your rep’s pipeline while showing them how to do it and they will then evolve into an efficient and motivated sales person. You can work on the budget Saturday or Sunday (your family will understand). As for Dave’s escalation, nobody seems to be able to handle these issues correctly so you follow your feet as they make a beeline to see Stan, your quality manager in the plant. Walking down the hallway you say to yourself, “Boy, I can’t wait till I get past these issues and things return to normal.”

The common challenges we uncover when dealing with selling managers are:

- Lack of support/peer guidance
- Transitioning from selling to managing coaching and leading
- Strategies versus tactics
- Time management
- Leading the team vs developing the individual
- Inability to delegate
- Micromanagement tendencies
- The “super salesperson syndrome”
- Creating accountability

- Motivating and inspiring the team members

What to do:

Most of these mistakes I have made personally during my career. I wish I could say that you will not have to experience them, but the reality is that you will experience most if not all of them at some point in time. Reflecting back, there are several key steps that you can take as a new or tenured selling manager which will help you solve with these challenges.

- 1) Step back and recalibrate
- 2) Develop a strategic plan, become more strategic
- 3) Create a sense of purpose and team
- 4) Create accountability
- 5) Coach your people

Step back and recalibrate.

Most sales people are driven to action, driving themselves to a frenetic multitasking state, handling tasks that drive short to medium term results. They live eat and breathe quota. Few sales people invest enough time planning strategically. Each morning they get up, check their calendar, voice mail and email and get busy. As a selling manager you must have a very clear understanding of your primary objectives. Does your position have a well defined job description with very clear responsibilities? Have you spoken at length with your management to understand the top 5 objectives of the position? Do you have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of your team, both collectively and individually? What are the gaps between the current state of the team and the desired state? It is imperative that you take a deep breath, unlearn many of the behaviors you adopted as a sales rep and realize that people are infinitely more important than tasks. Your responsibility as you move forward is to link the corporate vision to the daily tactics of your team. The connection is implementing a sound strategy.

Develop a strategic plan, become a more strategic thinker

Alignment of the organization is your primary responsibility. Your team may have been micromanaged to tasks with no real understanding of how their roles supported the corporate objectives. Your sales team is driven to action, but is it the most effective action, or are they running fast just to keep up? Alignment occurs when vision is connected to tactics through a well thought out and equally well executed strategic sales and marketing plan. Building the plan however is only the first step. The internet can provide you with many planning templates, so this is actually the easy part. The greatest challenge is executing the plan and getting both you and your people to think and act more strategically. Transitioning to a strategic sales organization can not be accomplished through

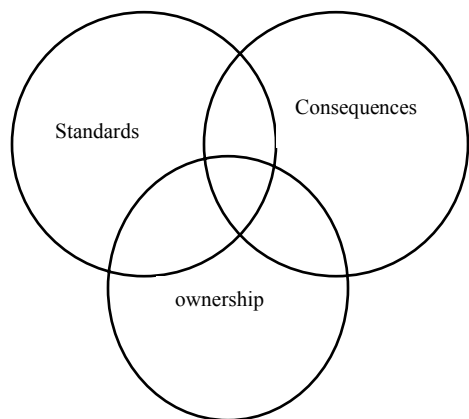
training and education. It is a deliberate and consistent focus on modifying behaviors, and needs strong coaching and mentoring if it is to be achieved. The payoff when you get there however is enormous.

Create a sense of purpose and team

Your team needs a rallying point. It is your responsibility to build this sense of purpose and team. There is no more motivating culture than one which instills a sense of teamwork and collaboration toward a common purpose. The strategic plan becomes that purpose and you become the catalyst in achieving that plan. If you wish to rally the team around this mission, you must create an environment of ownership and empowerment. Involve your team in the construction of the plan, and particularly the tactics to achieve the plan. Empower them to come up with the actions which they need to accomplish their goals. Establish short term, tactical initiatives and provide motivating rewards when met. Keep in mind these rewards do not have to be expensive or extravagant. You must merely catch people doing the right thing and recognize and motivate them to continue doing it.

Create accountability

It is my experience that managers generally do not hold their people to high enough standards. As a premier sales person, you held yourself to a very high standard of performance. You will continue to do so as a selling manager as this is a trait that transcends any position because it is a part of your makeup. However, because it is a character trait, you will find that accountability varies greatly from person to person. Accountability is the intersection of three critical components.



- Set the proper standards of performance (both quantity and quality metrics)
- Be Consistent in applying consequences (positive and negative) to results

- Make sure that it is your people who own the plan, NOT YOU!

Coach your people:

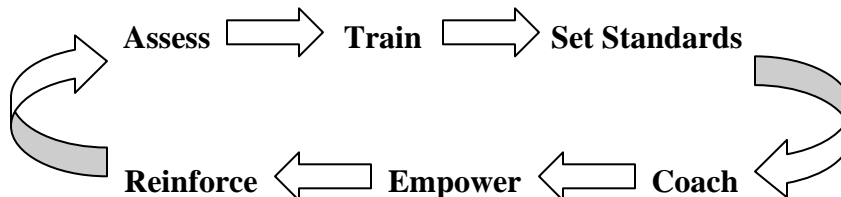
Coaching is the big buzzword in the corporate world these days. Everyone talks about it, no one is sure exactly what it is and few people do it well. Most people confuse training, mentoring, supervising, managing and coaching. If you are a manager you probably trip over coaching opportunities all day long, but the frenzy of our day prevents us from pausing long enough to invest in our greatest asset... human capital. Most times we are too busy to even recognize the opportunity before us. Frankly coaching is over hyped and underutilized by most managers. Poor coaching can be a demoralizing and draining experience for all. Great coaches possess exceptional listening skills, and provide perspective which allows the employee to raise their personal awareness of their strengths and weaknesses, and take accountability for their own personal improvement. Another way to view coaching is as it relates to training; whereas training is a transfer of intellectual knowledge, coaching is assisting the rep in taking accountability for their own behaviors and managing their personal growth.

Coaching takes many forms. It can be as simple as asking your people “what do you think we should do about the problem?” next time they descend upon you as you enter the office. It should also be time which is formally scheduled weekly or monthly in which you set aside 30 minutes to career path your people and provide performance feedback. Coaching starts with vision and leads to accountability and empowerment. Define what coaching is to you, and make a commitment to invest in your people. To get you started, my definition is below:

Coaching is an empowering learning environment which leads to self-realization and self-actualization by the employee. The objective is to be a catalyst in affecting lasting personal growth, balance and contentment.

In Summary:

Even the best of companies are challenged with creating and sustaining a learning organization. Your objective is to create a learning sales enterprise. How do you do it? Follow the below proven process to shift your culture towards a learning enterprise



Exceptional leaders understand the value of human relations and the distinction between leadership, management, supervision and training. In addition, and perhaps most importantly, they are able to apply these skills in appropriate doses and at appropriate times. Leadership boils down to the ability to maintain focus on those practice areas which yield the greatest gain: Coaching, Hiring, Assessing, Managing and Planning, an acronym which I have come to call **CHAMP**.

Coaching & Mentoring

Hiring, Recruiting & Interviewing

Assessing & Benchmarking

Managing and Leading

Planning and Implementation

These five practice areas should consume 85% of a manager's time. The sad reality is that my surveys show that on average less than 15% of a manager's time is spent on these endeavors.

About Don Hahn CFCC, CPBA, CPVA

Donald J. Hahn, managing Partner of Hahn Training has enjoyed a successful 30 year plus sales and sales management career. Working for fortune 500 companies, Don consistently ranked in the top 5% of performers nationwide. As an accomplished sales executive and leader he has delivered marketing, training, coaching and recruiting solutions to hundreds of companies and thousands of sales professionals. He is an accomplished speaker and author. A Certified Franklin Covey Coach, Past President of the Buffalo Niagara Sales & Marketing Executives, member of the American Society for Training & Development and the International Coaching Federation, Don delivers remarkable results to his clients throughout the Greater Niagara Region. Numerous fortune 1000 companies have benefited from his unique sales insights and trainings over the years. Don delivers a reliable interviewing tool entitled H.I.R.E which improves sales candidate selection.



Key areas of strength include:

- ◆ Sales and Sales Management Training
- ◆ Sales Performance Management
- ◆ Strategic Planning
- ◆ Sales Recruitment
- ◆ Compensation planning
- ◆ Coaching: Sales & Executive
- ◆ Interviewing Sales Professionals
- ◆ Benchmarking
- ◆ Performance Improvement

More on Don Hahn:

Mr. Hahn has earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration from the State University of New York at Buffalo. He is Past President of the BNSME, a certified Franklin Covey Coach, a CEL Alumni and member of the International Coaching Federation. Don is a certified professional Behavior Analyst and delivers DiSC, PIAV and 360 behavioral assessments as a TTI Distributor. He resides in East Amherst, New York with Deborah, his wife of thirty one years.

Professional affiliations:

- ◆ Franklin Covey Certified Coach
- ◆ Amherst Chamber of Commerce
- ◆ InfoTech Niagara
- ◆ Buffalo Niagara Partnership
- ◆ Niagara University Small Business
- ◆ World Trade Center Buffalo Niagara
- ◆ International Coaching Federation
- ◆ Buffalo Niagara Sales & Marketing Executives
- ◆ UB's Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership
- ◆ American Society for Training & Development
- ◆ Niagara USA Chamber

Hobbies: Golf, Gardening, Skiing, Reading
Favorite Movie: Casablanca

Favorite Book: *The Partner* by John Grisham
Favorite Restaurant: The Buffalo Chop House